

THE RULES

I. RULE OF THE FORTY-FOUR VIRGINS

- V1.** They will not be more than forty-four in number. When one dies or otherwise leaves, the parish-priest will appoint a replacement. He will choose a steady, good-living person who will take a vow not to marry for one year.
- V2.** Those who are called by God to marry will ask the advice of their spiritual director and when they have completed the time for which their vow was binding, they will give up their veils and rings before marrying. The director will refund the cost of these articles, if desired, and they will be sold again to new members.
- V3.** The virgins will be specially faithful to saying the Rosary every day. They will avoid the smallest fault against purity or anything at all which might in the least sully their holy state, such as dances, parties and the company of the opposite sex.
- V4.** They will meet in church four times a year on the following feasts of our Lady: the Annunciation, the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption, the Immaculate Conception and the Purification. They will dress in white, receive Holy Communion at High Mass and after Vespers they will carry our Lady's statue in procession. Then either the parish-priest or his deputy will give them an instruction in the Rosary chapel.
- V5.** They will obey their mother mistress and her two assistants and will accept their advice with respect and submit when ordered or forbidden to do something for the general good.
- V6.** If, after receiving two admonitions, one of the virgins should continue to give bad example, her name will be removed from the list of members and a more suitable person will be chosen to take her place.
- V7.** Each year on the feast of the Annunciation, they will renew their vow for one year.

II. RULE OF THE WHITE PENITENTS

- P1.** They will be men of high moral standard who say the Rosary regularly.
- P2.** They will go to Confession frequently especially on the first Sunday of the month and the principal feasts of the year.
- P3.** Four times in the year they will walk in procession, barefoot and dressed in white.
- P4.** Each week they will practice some act of bodily mortification in keeping with their strength and on the advice of a wise director.
- P5.** They will edify the faithful of both sexes by their example of Christian virtue.
- P6.** They will not engage in any lawsuit. Should there be differences to regulate, they will consult prudent and informed people so as to settle the matter out of court.
- P7.** In order to avoid scandal and moral corruption, they will go to taverns only by necessity.
- P8.** When one of their members dies they will assist at his funeral and pray for the repose of his soul.
- P9.** They will meet frequently, as arranged by their director, to receive the instructions he will see fit to give them.
- P10.** To be accepted into the congregation, the aspirant must receive a majority vote.

III. THE PILGRIMAGE TO OUR LADY OF SAUMUR

made by the Penitents to obtain from God good missionaries

- S1.** You will make this pilgrimage for the following intentions: Firstly, to obtain from God through Mary's intercession good missionaries, who will follow the example of the apostles by complete abandonment to divine Providence and the practice of virtue under the protection of our Lady.

Secondly, to obtain the gift of wisdom in order to know, love and practise the truths of our faith and to lead others to Christ.

S2. You will not have anything to distinguish you from others, except your modest demeanour, your holy silence, and your continual prayer. You could, however, without making yourselves conspicuous, have a rosary in your hand and a crucifix around your neck to show that you are on a pilgrimage and not making an ordinary journey.

S3. In the villages and towns you will walk two by two to edify, but in the country you will keep together and not separate into groups except through necessity or obedience. If through fatigue anyone falls behind, the others in their charity wait for him and, if necessary, put him on a horse, thus keeping each other as members of one body.

S4. On the journey they will sing hymns, say the Rosary or engage in silent prayer. They will not speak to each other except for one hour in the morning about ten o'clock and again after dinner between one and two o'clock.

S5. The day's time-table is as follows:

1. As far as possible they will stay in the same inn; the weaker men will sleep in beds, the more penitent on hay and straw. They will observe silence and say the evening prayer together.

2. They will all get up at daybreak when the superior gives the signal. They will say together the Our Father, Hail Mary, creed, the commandments of God and the Church.

3. Then if there is a church fairly near they will visit the Blessed Sacrament and sing the Tantum Ergo with its prayer.

4. As they resume their journey they will sing hymns and say the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, then they will keep silent for half an hour meditating on the Passion and Death of our Lord.

5. Meditation finished, they will say the first Rosary in two choirs. To facilitate this, they will try, as far as possible, to walk in twos or fours.

6. After the Rosary they will sing hymns for about an hour until, at a signal from the superior, they will walk together until dinner, unless they are passing through a town or village when they will again sing hymns.

7. If there is a church close to where they stop for dinner, they will pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament before going to the inn.

8. At the inn, if it is possible, they will either all go to an upstairs room or group together in a room on the ground floor. They will kneel down and after having sung "O Holy Spirit, give us your light," and said a Hail Mary, they will sit at table.

9. When grace has been said, one of them will read a short passage to which they will listen in silence. At the end of the reading, the superior, whom they obey for the love of Jesus Christ, will give them permission to talk.

10. Before leaving the inn, they will sing "Mother of God, you are our Mother," and "Lord, graciously reward our benefactors," then they will say a Hail Mary.

11. After dinner they will take recreation for an hour, at the end of which the superior will give the signal for the second Rosary which they will say in two choirs. They will then sing hymns for an hour, keep silent for an hour and then talk quietly until they reach their night's lodgings.

12. On their arrival, while the one appointed prepares a meal, they will say the third Rosary to edify anyone who might see or hear them. Finally they take their evening meal and go to bed in the manner mentioned above.

S6. Unless they are prevented by sickness they try to fast during the whole pilgrimage.

S7. They will never leave the group nor do anything out of the ordinary without the permission of the one whom they have chosen as their leader and superior. Thus they will be blessed more by their obedience than by their penance.

S8. About a quarter of an hour before arriving at Saumur, they may take off their shoes and go into the Lady Chapel barefoot, two by two, singing hymns. But if they arrive in the morning when Mass is being celebrated, they must stop singing at the door. At the end of Mass or in the evening when the office is not being sung, the superior may ask permission of the sacristan to say the Rosary aloud and to sing hymns before the statue of our Lady. If this is not permitted they will be content to pray silently for as long as the superior wishes. No one must leave without necessity or without his permission. In this way they will all together defeat God's enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh, in their united effort to separate and subvert the pilgrims.

S9. All the pilgrims will go to Confession and each will receive Holy Communion at least once and all the group together will receive Communion at ten o'clock the day after their arrival. They will spend the rest of the day at Saumur, not sight-seeing like tourists, but praying and thanking God like genuine penitents.

S10. They will leave the following day after having been to Mass and again receiving Holy Communion, provided they have not committed any serious sin and have obeyed this rule and their superior.

S11. The superior will allow them to go just once to buy devotional articles but they must return to the inn and not go elsewhere.

S12. After Mass and half an hour's prayer, they will leave the town of Saumur, walking two by two, singing hymns. They will ignore the jeers of the irreligious; their only answer will be their modesty, their silence and their songs of spiritual joy.

S13. If they make the pilgrimage in this way, I am sure they will be seen to be worthy of God, of angels and of men; and they will obtain from God through the intercession of his Blessed Mother great graces not only for themselves but for the whole Church of God.

S14. It would be fitting that they do not mention the names of the missionaries who have drawn up this present rule so as to ensure that the glory go to God alone; since he alone inspired this undertaking, he alone must be the reward.

S15. On their return they will render an account of all the trials they have had to face as well as everything else that has happened to them, and in thanksgiving a solemn High Mass will be offered for them.